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A REQUISITE FOR TRUE SUCCESS.

IN perusing Tom Taylor's introduction to the Autobiographical Recollections* of the artist Leslie, lately deceased, we have been pleased to find that spiritual apprehension of the artist's nature which at once gives us the key to all his labors and creations. Very few editors and critics penetrate the outward forms on the canvas to discover and analyze the spirit which inspired the work. When an author shows the ability for such an analysis, and betrays a correct perception of the mental and spiritual qualities of the artist, we are charmed into a frequent reading of the pages, that nothing shall escape attention which can enlighten our understanding of the artist.

Leslie's life was one of *practical beauty*: he lived as he thought, purely; and he painted as he lived, in the spirit of kindness. His works are characterized by a tenderness and truth which indicate the gentle-hearted man; and all his creations, humorous and serious, inspire us with a sense of the artist's *loving* apprehension of humanity. Mr. Taylor says:

"How could *he* be other than truthful, lovely, charitable, and tasteful in his pictures, who in his home as in society, in his teaching as in his conduct, was habitually sincere, affectionate, equable, thoughtful of others, tolerant, loving to dwell rather on the good than on the bad about him?" And then adds: "It would be well if there were more lives that should show so exact a parallel of good attributes of the workman and his works."

We are reminded by this, that many artists do not live pure lives, and do not live the beautiful which they seek to interpret on canvas. It is a question which our limits forbid us to argue, how far a man may be permitted to depart from the laws of beauty, in his thoughts and feelings, who essays to become a teacher of beauty, either as an orator, a poet, an artist, or Gospel minister. Coleridge, we think it is, somewhere says, it is an evidence of true genius for a man to write as he does *not* feel and write with power,

since it is a triumph over himself of the purely spiritual within him. A sentiment of this nature comes gracefully from that great master of thought and expression, since by it he pleads excuse for his own great weaknesses of flesh; but its general application as a principle of action would prove vastly deleterious.

If we are not to exemplify in our expressions and works what is within our hearts, then we are to practise an hypocrisy which, at times, must be monstrous. If a minister is permitted to live a lascivious life in his heart, and yet must preach the immaculate purity of Christ, it seems to us that, instead of his successful ministration furnishing evidence of a *genius* for his calling, it proves the inherent capacity for evil which the man possesses, if hypocrisy is an evil. Coleridge's philosophy would teach us to admire the preacher even if we could not love the man.

The same must be said of the artist who, living an impure life, steps forward to become the interpreter of the beautiful in nature; the great in action; the grand in emotion; the spiritual in conception. With Coleridge's dispensation at his command, he may riot in debauchery—may live a life which shocks every sentiment of true purity, yet will only achieve the greater triumph when he produces a canvas which embodies beauty, grace, pathos, or power. The injunction of the philosopher, indeed, offers a premium upon badness, in view of the reward which it holds out to him, who, in spite of his mental and moral obliquity, can still produce impressive works—a success proves him the greater genius as his personal depravity is more confirmed.

This philosophical dictum is a flattering unction to the souls of those who would live one life and exemplify another—whose tastes lead in the direction of the impure, while their duty and reputation claim from them what is pure. But it is a base assumption, at the best; for, of all sins which tend to demoralize humanity, that which seeks to exalt the virtue of a vice is the worst, as leading to the most deplorable results in the end.

We believe it a necessity of great success in art that the artist should be a pure-minded, noble-souled, lovable and loving man—as much a necessity as for a philanthropist to be humane and appreciative of others' woes—for a preacher to be crowned with holiness and enthused

with a love of his Master's works—for a statesman to be brave, disinterested, and of incorruptible integrity—for a poet to be open to all the gentle and ennobling influences of earth, air, and the supernal. It is true, an immodest mind may paint a Madonna, a Grace, a child, just as a minister of holiness may preach godliness while he practices ungodliness—for a mere talent for expression will do it all; but, if the painter would "throw his soul into his work," that soul must be one conscious of its purity, and inspired with a reverent feeling for beauty: otherwise, the triumph will really prove a great failure; for, while he showed evident capability for executing a high conception, he failed to give it the life and spirit which flow from the subtle insight and power of purity—the purity of beauty.

Wienbreuner says: "To copy the beauty of Nature cannot be called being an artist in the highest sense of the word, as a mechanical talent only is requisite for this. The beautiful in art depends on ideas; and the true artist, therefore, must possess, together with the talent for technical execution, that *genial power* which revels freely in rich forms, and is capable of producing and animating them." If these ideas are vulgar, or tinged with the shadows of grossness, or if they are strong enough to mould the daily life of the person into moral delinquencies, they will surely leave their impress upon the work of the brain and the hands which are their instruments of expression.

The secret of Leslie's success lies in the fact of his childlike purity: had he been a coarse man, or one of less true nobility of character, his works would, beyond doubt, have dropped measurably in *degree* of merit—he would have occupied a comparatively inferior position in the world of English art.

We could wish that this subject might be impressed upon the minds of many young artists of our circle of acquaintance, who bid fair to attain respectable positions as painters. A feeling prevails, to an alarming extent, that a good moral character and a virtuous life have little or nothing to do with their artistic reputations; hence, the record of their "un-artistic" hours is one over which the angels might sigh. Let us beg of them to peruse the story of Leslie's life and successes, and learn from it wherein lies the secret which not only makes great artists, but also good and lovable men.

* Autobiographical Recollections. By the late Charles Robert Leslie, R. A. Edited, with a Prefatory Essay on Leslie as an artist, and selections from his correspondence, by Tom Taylor, Esq. With portrait on steel. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 12mo, 363 pages.